

*Mitchell, Franks, Giffords, Kirkpatrick want at least \$400 Million for SCAAP*

WASHINGTON - U.S. Reps Harry Mitchell, Trent Franks, Gabrielle Giffords and Ann Kirkpatrick joined together today to request additional funding for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) following news that a Congressional subcommittee restored some, but not all, of the funds that were eliminated in President Obama's Budget.

"Arizona's law enforcement communities are burdened by the federal government's inability to secure the border," said Mitchell. "Their manpower and their budgets have been stretched thin and the SCAAP funding has been critical to helping ease the financial strain. We urge the Appropriations Committee to fully restore this important immigration funding."

"The Federal Government's inability to secure our border and enforce immigration laws has put an enormous burden on our local law enforcement agencies. The SCAAP funding is crucial given the fact that there are such high numbers of illegal immigrants in our jails. The Federal Government has a responsibility to ensure these cash-strapped law enforcement agencies are financially compensated for doing the job the federal government should have done in the first place," Franks said.

"Full funding for SCAAP is essential," said Giffords. "State and local law enforcement agencies depend on this money - now more than ever. As long as they are doing the federal government's job of securing our border, they must be compensated for it."

"Arizonans are tired of carrying the federal government's burden of dealing with illegal immigration and border security, and SCAAP helps ensure that we do not get stuck with the entire bill for this national problem," said Rep. Kirkpatrick. "Our local law enforcement needs more resources, not fewer. Congressional leadership must recognize that and fully fund this vital program."

The SCAAP program received \$400 million in fiscal year FY 2009 but the President's budget including no funds for the program in FY 2010. Last month, Mitchell, Giffords and Kirkpatrick called on appropriators in Congress to restore funding for the program that reimburses state and local law enforcement agencies for the cost of arresting and jailing illegal immigrants.

Today, the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee moved a bill forward that restores \$300 million for SCAAP in FY 2010, falling 25 % short of this year's levels. The Arizona lawmakers have renewed their call for at least \$400 million in funding for the 15-year old program calling it a critical source of funds for cash-strapped state and local agencies that are forced to divert resources from public safety services to deal with illegal immigrants.

In 2008, the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) received \$12.8 million from the federal government to house the 5,600 criminal illegal immigrants who were in state prisons. That is only 10% of the \$124 million Arizona spent to house illegal immigrant inmates that year. ADC estimates it will spend \$128 million in 2009 to house, clothe, feed and provide medical care to illegal immigrant inmates. That is over 10 percent of the Department's \$978 million budget. Currently, Arizona's state prisons hold 6,100 illegal immigrants, which is 15 percent of the total inmate population.

The Arizona lawmakers wrote to Reps. David Obey and Jerry Lewis, the top Democrat and Republican on the House Appropriations Committee.

*Below is the text of the letter:*

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Lewis:

While we appreciate the Subcommittee on Commerce Justice and Science's decision to include \$300 million for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) in the Fiscal Year 2010, we once again urge you to include at least \$400 million. SCAAP is currently authorized at \$950 million, and a funding level of \$300 million represents a 25 percent cut from

the amount appropriated in Fiscal Year 2009 funding.

SCAAP was created by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 to reimburse states and localities for the arrest, incarceration, and transportation costs associated with undocumented immigrants who commit crimes in our communities (PL 103-322). As you know, securing our nation's borders is the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. Border protection and immigrant enforcement are, and have always been, a federal responsibility. However, due to limited federal contributions, the bulk of costs for incarcerating criminal aliens are borne by counties, some of which are among the poorest in the nation and traditionally operate with slim budgets and staffing.

According to study commissioned by the U.S.-Mexico Border Counties Coalition that was released on March 5, 2008, illegal immigration is costing border counties millions of dollars a year for law enforcement and criminal prosecutions-diverting money from parks, libraries and other law enforcement efforts. Costs totaled \$192 million for the nation's 24 border counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas-more than double the costs in 1999. In 2008, the Arizona Department of Corrections received \$12.8 million from the federal government to house the 5,600 criminal illegal immigrants who were in state prisons. That is only 10% of the \$124 million Arizona spent to house illegal immigrant inmates that year.

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Arizona, like many states, is facing drastic state and county budget shortfalls. The reduction in SCAAP reimbursements currently included will result in less funding that states can spend on essential public safety services. We therefore urge you to support our state and local law enforcement by funding the SCAAP program at last year's \$400 million level in the Fiscal Year 2010 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

We appreciate the Committee's commitment to this critical program during consideration of the Fiscal Year 2009 bill and look forward to improving upon last year's efforts. Thank you for consideration of these views.